

# Abhidhamma scholars of the University of Yangon and their impact in Myanmar and beyond

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& King's College, London

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# Abhidhamma, 'Theravāda analytical philosophy of causality'

1. <i>Dhammasaṅgaṇi</i>	Analysis of reality into <i>dhamma</i> , elementary components that constitute the process of experience  (Note: The <i>Kathāvatthu</i> deals with debates between Theravada school and other early schools of Buddhism)
2. <i>Vibhaṅga</i>	
3. <i>Dhātukathā</i>	
4. <i>Puggalapaññatti</i>	
5. <i>Kathāvatthu</i>	
6. <i>Yamaka</i>	Synthesis of <i>dhamma</i> – the way in which things are interconnected – the depth of causality
7. <i>Paṭṭhāna</i>	

- 2<sup>nd</sup> BCE – 2<sup>nd</sup> CE: canonical texts
- 5<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> centuries: commentarial literature

# Abhidhamma list

- The *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*
  - *Thin-gyo* (တၢ်ဂီၢ်လၢၤ) in Burmese
- 169 conditioned *dhamma*

Types of form/materiality ( <i>rūpa</i> )	28
Types of consciousness ( <i>citta</i> )	89
Mental factors/aspects of consciousness ( <i>cetasika</i> )	52

- Arise when there are right conditions
  - Mutually dependent on each other
  - Temporary – constantly arising and falling
- 1 unconditioned *dhamma*: *Nibbāna*

# 'Jewelled House' at Bodhgaya





# Gods and bats



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London

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NEW YORK, TORONTO, MELBOURNE, AND BOMBAY  
1921

# U Pe Maung Tin (1888-1973)

- Education
  - Saya Koyin-gyi and local high school
  - Rangoon College (BA (Hons.) in Pali and M.A.)
  - Exeter College, Oxford, in 1921-22 (B.Litt)
  - The School of Oriental Studies, and the Inner Temple, London, in 1922-24
- Professor of Pali Studies in July 1912
- Principal of University College in 1937



# U Pe Maung Tin: a polymath

- Linguistics, history, Theravada studies, inscriptions
- Wide scholarly engagement
  - Lectures in America (1957-1959)
  - 5 publications by Oxford University Press

Inscriptions of Burma = မြန်မာတိုင်းရင်း ကျောက်စာများ  
(eds.) G. H. Luce and Pe Maung Tin. 5 vols.  
University of Rangoon Oriental Studies Publications,  
2–6. Rangoon: Oxford printed, 1933–56.



# Burma Research Society and its journal

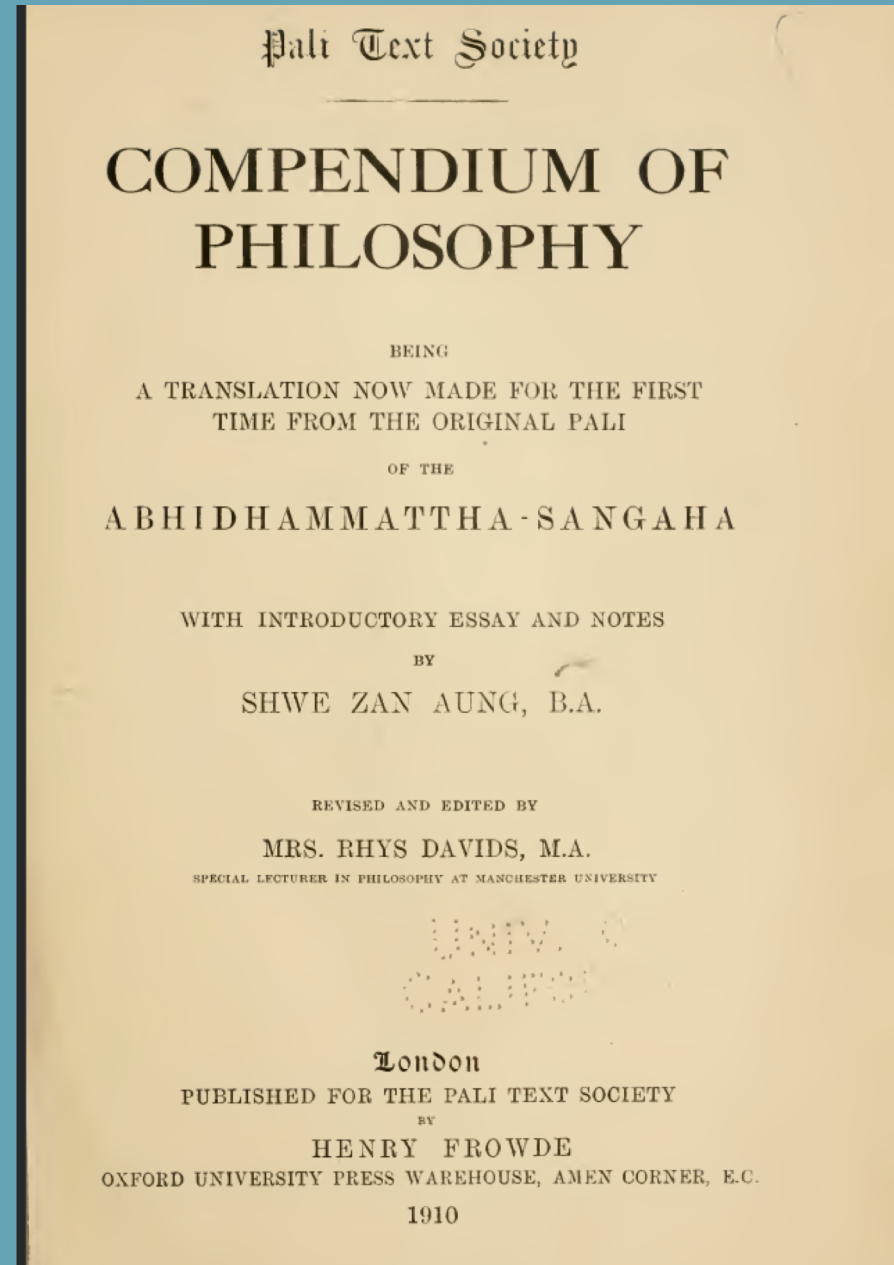
- Founded in 1910
- John Furnivall (1878-1960) and U May Oung (1880-1926)
- The University of Rangoon
- Journal of Burma Research Society
  - U Pe Maung Tin – 71 contributions
  - Breadth and depth of scholarship
- Unique contributions
  - Bringing people from diverse backgrounds
  - History, customs, language and literature of Burma
  - New kind of knowledge based on research and collaborations

# U Shwe Zan Aung (1871-1932)

“The Buddhist Philosophy of the Real”, 3 parts, *JBRS*, 1917.

“Buddhism and Science”, *JBRS*, 8.2. (1918): 99-106.

The significance of Buddhist teachings and practices in the modern world



# Sayadaw U Thittila (1896-1997)

Preceptor, Ven. Ādiccavaṃsa  
(1881-1950)

Studied in Myanmar, India,  
and England

Taught Abhidhamma in  
England in 1938

Lecturer in Abhidhamma in  
1952 at the University of  
Rangoon

Lectures in America in 1959

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## THE BOOK OF ANALYSIS (VIBHAṄGA)

THE SECOND BOOK OF THE ABHIDHAMMA PIṬAKA

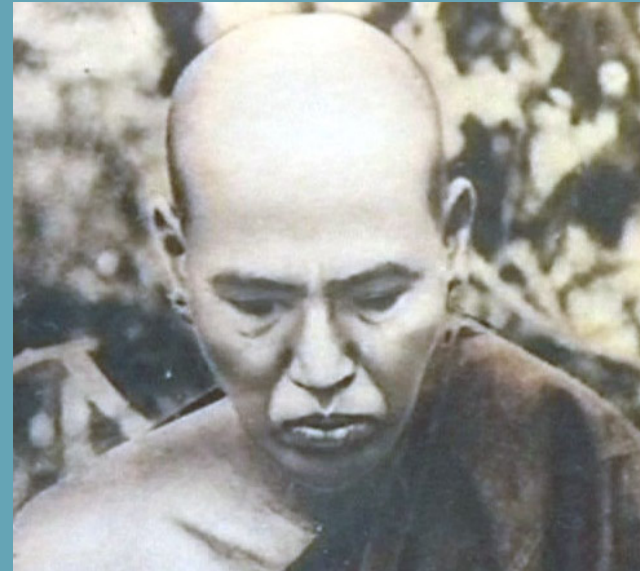
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2010

# Founding fathers of the Mindfulness movement

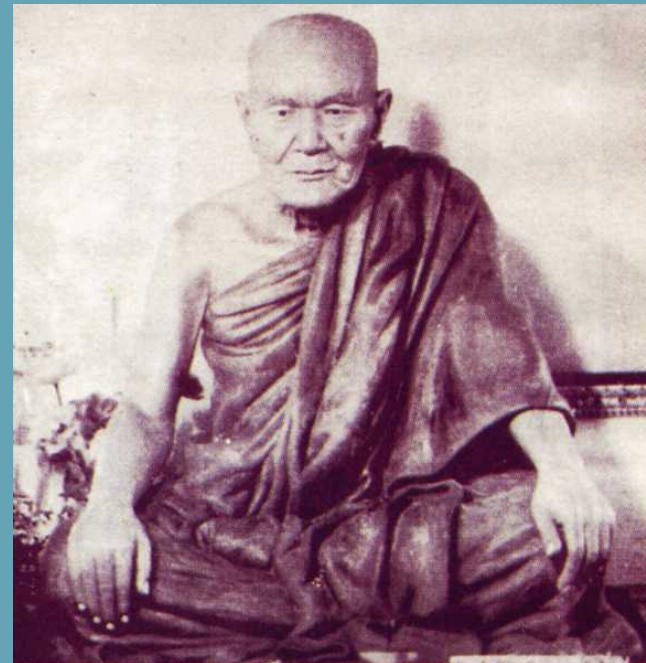
The Ledi Sayadaw U Ñāṇa  
(1846-1923)



The Mula-mingu Sayadaw U  
Narada (1869-1954)

Vipassanā meditation and  
study of Abhidhamma,  
especially among lay people

Slow transmission of  
Abhidhamma Studies globally





# Remembering the Past

- A long, rich tradition of Abhidhamma Studies in Myanmar, going back to the Pyu period
- An ambivalent approach
  - Appreciative joy (မုၼ်တၢ်) for our achievements
  - Compassionate (ဂုၼ်တၢ်) recollection of our missed opportunities
- Embrace and accept joyful and painful periods and events

# Ways forward

- A young institution and a young nation
- Same issues as our founding fathers:
  - What kind of knowledge would we like to foster?
  - What is the role of education?
  - How we could integrate traditional and contemporary learning?
- Liberal outlook and collaborative relationships

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